

THE
Previous QUESTION

TO THE
Several Questions

ABOUT
Valid and Invalid BAPTISM,
LAY-BAPTISM, &c.

CONSIDER'D,

VIZ.

Whether there be any Necessity (even upon the Principles of Mr. WALL's History of Infant-Baptism) for the continual Use of Baptism among the Posterity of Baptiz'd Christians?

Rom. 11. 16. *If the Root be Holy, so are the Branches.*

It fully appears that Water-Baptism was never intended by God, but either only, or chiefly, for an Introductory or Planting Ordinance, i. e. to attend the Gospel for a time, at its first Reception by a People, until it should get some Rooting among 'em, not for a standing Ordinance in one and the same place; whereof good reason might be given, &c. says Mr. John Goodwin. Water-Dipping no Footing for Church-Communion, p. 30.

L O N D O N,

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Quære, Whether Christian Baptism was intended by our Lord Jesus Christ, for such as descend from Christian Parents, and are born in the Church; or only for such as become Profelytes to Christianity from an Infidel State?

I AM sensible it will be look'd on as a great Presumption, to call into question a Practice that has so long and so generally obtain'd among Christian Churches, as has the Practice of baptizing the Posterity of Christians, whether in their Infant or Adult Estate; and upon which so many rest their Confidence, as on a most glorious Privilege, and mighty Means of their Salvation: But as I am one who admit no Plea of Prescription against Truth, so shall I judg it a sufficient Defence against all such popular and weak Arguments, if once it can be made appear, that *from the beginning it was not so practis'd, nor ordain'd.* And tho I do not positively assert, that according to the original Institution of *Jesus Christ*, none but such as came out of Infidelity were to be baptiz'd, yet I profess I very much question whether it were not so; and therefore desire a fair Solution of the Difficultys which I apprehend are not duly consider'd, by them who plead for the Baptism of such as are born of and educated under Christian Parents.

The great Ground of this my Doubt arises from that fundamental Proof of *Infant-Baptism*, taken from the Use of Baptism among the *Jews*, by which Profelytes were wont to be initiated, as 'tis set forth in *Mr. Wall's History of Baptism* (which has put me upon this Essay) and many others before him.

'Tis well argu'd by the Learned *Pedobaptists*, that our Saviour's Command to baptize, being general, must in all reason be suppos'd to mean, that it should be done according to the known common Practice of Baptism (if there were any such Practice) which his Disciples well understood, and had been acquainted with. Otherwise it had been most necessary for our Lord Jesus to have made such exceptions from the general Method of Practice, and such new Rules as his Disciples were to observe, and

which they could not learn without some farther Direction, than his general Command to *go and baptize*. For our Saviour only bids them *Go and baptize all Nations, &c. Mat. 28. 19.* he adds not one word of Limitation or special Direction about the *Subjects* of Baptism. So that if the *Jews* had been accusom'd (as Mr. Wall asserts, and with very probable reason too) to disciple Infidels, whether Infants or Adult, by baptizing them into their Communion; there is no just doubt to be made, but that our Lord, speaking among *Jews*, and bidding them, *Go and disciple all Nations, baptizing them*; did leave 'em to understand it of their practising it under the like Rules, and upon the like Subjects, as was usual among the *Jews* already. 'Twas indeed to be a Baptism into another Religion, and to be extended to all Nations; but no other Exception was made from the known Rules of Baptism: and therefore Mr. Wall, in his *Introduction*, has upon this very Principle built his Argument, and very strongly infers, that Infants are the due Subjects of *Christian* Baptism, because they were so of the *Jewish*.

Nor can I see any room left for a modest and ingenuous Denial of the Inference, supposing the Premises to be true, *viz.* That Baptism of Profelytes and their Infant-Children was an usual and known Practice among the *Jews* in our Saviour's Days on earth. I must confess I cannot see any Argument for Infant-Baptism so forcible as this, taken from the Practice of baptizing *Jewish Profelytes*; nor does Mr. Wall seem to me, to rely on any other, without this. How Mr. Wall can reconcile Infant-Baptism to the Method and Office for Baptism, prescrib'd by the Church of *England*, is another question; by which the Child is suppos'd to be a Believer, and by its Suretys does profess, *I believe, and I desire to be baptiz'd*; which an Infant not grown up to Understanding will not easily be suppos'd capable of, so that it seems tacitly to be intended only for actual Believers: and by this one Concession, great Advantage is afforded, and some think the Cause is in effect given up to the *Antipædobaptists*, who plead only for Believers Baptism. But this is only an Argument *ad hominem*, or against the Church, and weakens not the Cause of Infant-Baptism in general, which is so well establish'd upon his main *Topick*, *viz.* the antient *Jewish* Practice of baptizing Infant-Profelytes; and which I suppose Mr. Wall is more concern'd to defend, than the Office of a particular Church, tho ever so well constituted.

I know the *Antipædobaptists* do not admit the Evidence to this Practice of *Jewish Baptism* in our Saviour's time; but I think impartially, that Mr. Wall, after others, has made it highly probable at least, from very many Testimonys of the *Jewish* Writers, who, I think without any one dissenting Voice, allow the Fact. And tho the Testimonys be from *Jews* since Christ's time (we not having any of their more antient Writings, except the Sacred)

Sacred) yet since they who best knew their own Traditions that were current among them, and especially of a visible open matter of Fact, as this of Baptism was, and from whom only one can hope to understand their own History of Facts, not recorded expressly in Scripture; since they, I say, do unanimously agree in this matter of Fact, I take it to be a Testimony of very great force, and not to be slighted by such as cannot say half a quarter so much, indeed can say nothing at all, for proof of the Negative. The Pretence of *Rabbi Eliezar's* denying any such Custom among the *Jews*, taken from *Sir Norton Knatchbul*, is sufficiently expos'd at the end of *Mr. Wall's* Introduction; being indeed no Denial of such a Practice at all.

And indeed besides the mention of a *Jewish Baptism*, by some of the antient Christian Writers, to which they oppose the Christian Baptism; 'tis hard to be deny'd, that there is a broad Intimation, even in the Gospel it self, of such a known Practice among the *Jews* in *John the Baptist's* time, in that question of the *Pharisees*, *John 1. 25. Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor a Prophet?* They wonder'd not at proselyting by Baptism; for they ask'd not, What meanest thou by this Action? as they had probably done, had it been a novel and strange Ceremony; but only they demand by what Authority he thus made Proselytes, *i. e.* among the *Jews*, who were already of the true Church and Faith, and therefore without some new Dispensation (for establishing whereof there needed at least some great Prophet) he could have no Authority to baptize or proselyte among the *Jews*. They speak as if they knew such Baptism to be of that great importance, that none but one authoriz'd to introduce a new State of Religion, might authorize this Practice of it. How come they to esteem it of so much more signification than other Ceremonys, which they scrupled not to admit upon less Authority than of a great Prophet? I suppose 'twas because they had been accusom'd to such a solemn Use of it, as that of proselyting Persons to the true Religion.

I own this is not expressly nor demonstratively to be shewn from the Text; but I see no Sense of it so fair and natural as this. And therefore taking this only for a strong Presumption, added to the former Testimonys, for the antient Practice of Baptism among the *Jews*, I think that all taken together, ties the Argument so hard, that the *Antipedobaptists* cannot solve it, nor offer half so many Probabilities either from Reason or Testimonys, against this *Matter of Fact*, as are brought for it; I mean for the Use of baptizing Proselytes into the *Jewish* Religion: since they can neither find one antient *Jewish* Writer who denies this Custom, whilst so many affirm it, nor one of them who own the Use of Proselyte-Baptism at all, that ever denies it to have extended to *Infants*, as well as to others.

Especially

Especially are these Testimonys of the *Jewish* Writers of greater weight, because this very Practise which they report to have been of so antient a date, did still remain among 'em: for I must confess, that if it had not been of that Antiquity which it pretends to, *viz.* before Christ's time; I cannot suppose it would ever have become a Custom among the *jews* afterward. Would they begin to proselyte Persons to their Religion by Baptism in imitation of the Disciples of *Jesus of Nazareth*, whom they held accursed? They would never so far own him, as to bring in a new Institution in conformity to his Command; which Innovation among them could not but be taken great notice of, and 'tis likely would have been observ'd and remark'd by some Writer, Jewish or Christian. 'Tis of no force to say, that the latter *Jews* might pretend Baptism to have been an old Practise among their Nation, on purpose that the Christian Religion might be thought to borrow from theirs; since this was never deny'd by the Christian Church. We know that Christians are but *engrafted into their Olive-Tree*, of which they were the natural Branches; and that we are built on the *Foundation of their Prophets*, Rom. 11. Eph. 2. 20. that Christ instituted his Supper after the manner of the *Post-cenium*, at the Paschal Supper of the *Jews*, and borrow'd many Customs from that Church. Christians suffer nothing by owning this, nor was there any Contention about it to prompt the *Jews* to forge an Evidence in the Case. So that if this *Proselyte-Baptism* were taken up by them since Christ's time, it must have been a mere Innovation in imitation of Christians; which whether that be most likely, I leave any one to judg. For my own part, I am much more ready to believe their own Testimonys to the Antiquity of that Practise, as being antecedent to Christ's Institution of Baptism, as their Paschal *Post-cenium* was to his other Institution of the *Lord's Supper*.

But then, if these Premises be true, and the Inference for *Pædobaptism* be just, both which Mr. Wall strenuously maintains; I cannot see but another Inference will be equally just, tho not so grateful to Mr. Wall, *viz.* That then none of the Posterity of Christians descended from baptiz'd Parents or Ancestors, in a continu'd Christian Line, not interrupted by open Apostacy from Christianity, are bound by Christ's Institution to be baptiz'd. And so both *Pædo*-and *Antipædobaptists* will be in great measure silenc'd at one blow.

To make this appear, we must consider that Mr. Wall's and the *Pædobaptists* Argument hence for Infant-Baptism, has no force but upon this ground alone, *viz.* that our Lord Jesus giving his Command to baptize in general, without any *Caveat* or Limitation, did leave his Apostles to apply Baptism to all the same Subjects as the *Jews* were wont to do; and therefore to Infants as well as to others. And it will be said, that for the same reason the Christian Baptism was to have no other Subjects than

than the *Jewish* Baptism had, which was never apply'd to any of the Offspring of Believers, born in the Church. For Mr. Wall has fully prov'd, by the same Authority which evidences their Custom to baptize *Infant-Profelytes*, that the *Jews* never did baptize any that were born of Parents who were profelyted before; and that 'twas a Maxim among them, *Filius baptizati habetur pro baptizato*; i. e. *The Child born of one baptiz'd, is accounted as one baptiz'd himself*. It seems that the one *Sanctification* of the Parents was to them and their Issue, unless they cut off the Entail by their Apostasy to Infidelity.

So that if our Lord left his Disciples to practise according to the known establish'd Rules of the *Jews*, it follows that he no more allow'd 'em hereby to add any new Subjects of Baptism, viz. such as the Offspring of Believers, than to bar any of the former allow'd Subjects of it; i. e. the *Infant-Profelytes* born in the Uncleanneſs or Infidelity. If Mr. Wall's Argument be good, it leaves the Case, as to the Subjects of Baptism, just as it was before: since there is no more warrant from Christ's Institution to add, than to diminish; or to baptize born Members of the Church, than to cut off the Infants of new Profelytes.

Nay, if we consider well Christ's Commission to baptize, it seems directly to respect only the Profelytes from Infidelity: Mat. 28. 19. *Go disciple (i. e. profelyte, says Mr. Wall) all Nations, baptizing them*. 'Twas upon their going to convert the unbelieving Gentiles, that they were empower'd to baptize 'em; so that where there is no more profelyting, there may seem to be no more baptizing intended. And as none, I think, can pretend that the *Jews by Nature* were accounted Profelytes among the *Jews*; so neither can such as are born and educated in the Christian Church, and of Christian Parents, be counted Christian Profelytes. How then come the Posterity of Profelytes to be the Subjects of Baptism now, among us Christians, if they were not so among the *Jews*; when at the same time the Custom and Practice of the *Jews* is own'd to be the Rule of Christ for the Practice of Baptism among Christians?

So that Mr. Wall must either allow, that Baptism may cease among Christian Churches where no Converts from Infidelity come in, and so yield the Cause to the *Socinians*; or if he still plead for the baptizing the Offspring of Christians, he must own that he goes quite off from his own Principles, and can never justify it by the *Jewish* Practice of Baptism; and so gives up his fundamental Argument for Infant-Baptism, after he had taken pains to establish it. And to what purpose does he call the *Antipædobaptists* to observe Christ's Institution, interpreted by the known *Jewish* Practice, when he himself is no more guided by it than they? 'Twill be expected that he either reconcile his Practice of baptizing Christians holy Posterity, to the *Jewish* Rule of not baptizing the Children born of Profelytes; or that he

he renounce his Opinion, viz. That Christ's Command is to be practis'd according to their known Rule, when he says, *Go and baptize*. And if he do this, he will have a hard task to answer his own Arguments to the contrary.

The Sum of what I justly gather from Mr. Wall's Argument is this ; Jesus Christ has requir'd his Disciples to proselyte and baptize the Nations : Now 'tis known how the Jews must needs understand such a Precept, viz. according to their own Usage, which was to baptize Proselytes and their Children born in Infidelity, but not any descended from them : And therefore let us go and do likewise.

And this seems to be built on good Reason, from the Nature and Design of Baptism ; which seems not to be intended for the washing away the Pollutions contracted in a State of Christianity, for then 'twere useful to repeat it often upon Christians ; but only the Uncleaness of Infidelity, when Men were Aliens to the Christian Church. They who came of a polluted abominable Stock, and Enemys to the Church of God, had reason to be symbolically purify'd by Baptism, because they were held for profane and unclean, till naturaliz'd and engrafted into the Holy Church. But being thus naturaliz'd, it seems to be for them and their Posterity all at once. Their Descendants are a holy Race of course ; for says the Apostle, *If the Root be holy, the Branches are also holy*, Rom. 11. 16. there needs no new engrafting of the natural Branches. Washing is not appointed for the Pure and Clean, but for the Unclean : Now the Text says exprelly, that the Children of Christian Parents *are not unclean, but they are holy*, or pure ; i. e. by being come of cleansed holy Parents, 1 Cor. 7. 14. It seems they are accounted as already baptiz'd, or cleansed in their Parents Baptism ; just agreeable to the Jewish Maxim abovesaid. 'Tis a strange Inference of some, that Children must be baptiz'd because they are said to be holy or clean, when the End of Baptism is to cleanse and make holy ; and if the Apostle says, they have that effect already by being of Christian Parents, what need of Baptism can be prov'd, where the Person is already politically and relatively holy, and has all the real Cleansing and Holiness, that is to be suppos'd to be wrought by such external Rites of Purification ?

As I take the *Antipædobaptists* Interpretation of that last mention'd Text to be too forc'd, who think by *being holy* is meant *being legitimate* ; whereas none are ever said in Scripture to be ἁγιοι, Saints or Holy, merely for being not Bastards : so I judg Mr. Wall's Sense to be no less violent, and as like a shift to serve a turn as the other. He understands it of a Holiness by being baptiz'd, as if the Apostle had said, *Else were your Children unbaptiz'd, but now they are sanctify'd by Baptism*. But how can this be a Consequence of the foregoing part of the Text ? *The unbelieving*

Heaving Wife has been sanctify'd (i. e. has been baptiz'd, as Mr. Wall expounds it) by the Husband, else were your Children unclean, (i. e. would be kept unbaptiz'd) but now are they holy, or Saints; i. e. they are generally baptiz'd, and so become holy. See his History of Inf. Bapt. p. 68. I say 'tis no just Consequence which he makes the Apostle to draw; nor would it follow, that if the Husband do not prevail upon the unbelieving Wife to be converted and baptiz'd, that then the Children would be unbaptiz'd; because tho only the Father were a Believer, the Child might be brought to Baptism, if nothing else hinder: and so in this sense the Children would not be unclean, tho the unbelieving Wife were never baptiz'd. So that this is not to be taken for the Apostle's Meaning.

And therefore Mr. Lock's Paraphrase, which Mr. Wall calls absurd, without shewing why, may yet stand; viz. that by being holy, is meant that such Children are not in the state of Heathens, but *born Members of the Christian Church*; not profane Aliens, but pure and natural Branches of the Commonwealth of the Christian Israel. Which seems to be all the Holiness which *Ferom* judg'd 'em capable of, when speaking of this Argument, and allowing a relative Holiness, such as belong'd to the Vessels of the Tabernacle, he adds, that nothing can be *properly holy*, but *what has sense, and fears God*. 'Tis not then want of Baptism, but want of Sense and Capacity, that hinders their being real Saints: and relatively they are such, antecedently to any Baptism. Nay, they are really Saints in design, or to use *Tertulian's* words, *Sanctitati designati, design'd for real Holiness*: by the Advantage of their Birth, and in the Intention of their Parents, and the Prospect of a Christian Education, they are the Expectants or the hopeful Candidates of real Piety, whether baptiz'd a-new or not, as far as yet appears.

It still strengthens the Presumption on this side, that in all the History of the Apostles and Churches in the *Acts of the Apostles*, we find not one Instance of the baptizing of any, that were born of Christian Parents, either Infants or Adult. The *Antipadobaptists* demand an Instance of any Infant being baptiz'd, and the *Padobaptists* ask for an Instance of any Adult Person's Baptism, who had been born of Christian Parents: but neither Side can produce any Evidence; no, not in all that first History of the Churches, running thro a Series of near thirty Years, in which time multitudes, no doubt, were born of Christian Parents, and grown up to Maturity and Manhood: and yet not one of 'em is mention'd to be baptiz'd; tho of many Profelytes 'tis often observ'd. So that it looks at best doubtful, whether any born Christians, or the Seed of Profelytes were baptiz'd, any more than the Seed of the *Jewish* Profelytes were. Nay, since the baptizing the holy Seed of Profelytes was beyond the known Rule and Custom of the *Jews*, in their Use of Baptism; 'twas

the more necessary to have been taken notice of in that *History of the Acts*, if the Apostles so practis'd : because it does not at all appear in Christ's Institution, that he intended such a Variation from the common Rules of the known *Jewish* Practice, and therefore it requir'd to be made plain by the History of the Apostles After-Practice. For if neither the original Institution of Christ, nor the After-Practice of the Apostles, do warrant this considerable Alteration in the Practice of Baptism, I cannot see how it should be known, or from whence Christians should be able to infer it to be a Duty.

So that upon the whole matter it must be own'd, that Mr. Wall, from the Custom and Practice of the *Jews*, has indeed urg'd a very strong Argument against the *Antipadobaptists*, and shews well, that Infants along with their proselyted Parents are to be enter'd into the Christian Society by Baptism. But then 'tis just as strong an Argument against himself, and all those who are for continuing Baptism among the Posterity of Christians. His Argument establishes Infant-Baptism; but then 'tis of no Infants, nor others, but who were born in Infidelity, or of Parents not Christian.

And therefore whatever weight he supposes our Lord to have laid upon Baptism in that Text, *John 3. 5.* it can only relate to such as are converted from Infidelity : Nor could *Nicodemus*, as a Master in *Israel*, be suppos'd to have understood him otherwise ; since with the *Jews*, only such were Subjects of Baptism.

And now when there is so much appearance of force in this Argument, against the Necessity of repeating Baptism to the Posterity of Christians, that an honest Mind may well be suppos'd to be convinc'd and determin'd by it ; one would wonder what occasion Mr. Wall had (in his *Introduction*, p. 54.) for that poor, invidious, and, I believe, false Suggestion : *'Tis easy*, says he, *to guess what sway'd Socinus into the other Opinion*, viz. *his Desire of abolishing the Doctrine of the Trinity ; which 'twas hard to accomplish, so long as Persons were continually baptiz'd into that Faith* : As if *Socinus* was against that Trinity, which he judg'd the Christian Baptism to relate to ; or would have that Doctrine abolish'd, which he understood Baptism to countenance. For 'tis certain he never imagin'd, that Baptism into the Name of one, to whom *all Power was given*, could be a reasonable Proof of that Person's Supreme Deity. So that 'tis much more likely he was sway'd by the pure Force of the Argument here insisted on, without the need of any other Prejudice. But 'tis hard to guess what sway'd Mr. Wall to such a mean Suggestion ; whether his great Prejudice, so oft vented against the *Socinians*, or his Willingness to make his Reader slip over the true reason of *Socinus's* being of that Opinion. For it is a pretty crafty way of some Writers, when they find their Adversarys produce a strong Argument to support their Opinion ; instead of answering it

it fairly, they fall a guessing what else may bias them, and insinuate some slender or odious secret reason, when they have given an open and more likely reason for themselves; which their Opposers find so troublesome, that they had much rather start some new imaginary Reasons for them, which they think they can better deal with. But Mr. Wall will be above this Method, who has observ'd (which on this occasion comes to mind) that a *great Stock of Learning does not always cure that narrowness of Soul, by which some are inclin'd to do any mean and foul thing to favour a Side, or set up a Party*, pag. 61. which is the heavy load he lays so unmercifully upon the illustrious *Grotius*, upon no sufficient occasion, I judg, if the Matter alledg'd were truly stated and consider'd.

I know not how early Instances Mr. Wall or any other can give of the Baptism of Children; or the *Antipædobaptists* of the Baptism of any adult Persons, that were born in Christianity. He has shown that all the antient Instances which the Antipædobaptists bring of adult Persons being baptiz'd, are of Persons most probably born of unprofelyted or Infidel Parents; and that there is but one Instance (and this very obscure and modern) to the contrary, viz. in *Greg. Nazianzen*, see *Hist.* p. 285. which is too late to be valu'd in an Inquiry after the Original Practice of Christians, being so late as the *fourth Century*. Now if Mr. Wall, on the other hand, cannot find any Instances of Children of baptiz'd Parents, who were baptiz'd in their Infancy, in early Antiquity (as I think he has not pretended to do for the *Two first Centuries*) I think it follows hence, that there are no Instances to be found either on one side or on the other; i. e. neither of the Baptism of any Adult, nor of any Infants descended from baptiz'd Parents; which is a great Presumption that no such were baptiz'd: However others, both Infants and Adult, might be so, viz. among new Converts from Infidelity.

Even *Tertullian* himself, tho a Man of no great Esteem by Mr. Wall's Account, seems to me to make a difference between the Issue of *Christians* and of *Pagans*, as to the needfulness of Baptism; he says (in Mr. Wall's Citation, *Hist.* p. 22.) *That no Birth, almost of the Heathens, is pure or clean, but that the Apostle has said, the Offspring, of either Parent sanctify'd, are holy: willing to be understood that they are design'd for Holiness, and by this to Salvation; otherwise (i. e. in any other Case, viz. of an unclean Birth) he would have minded 'em of the Lord's Decree, Except one be born of Water, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; that is, he shall not be holy.* It seems Christ's Rule for Baptism was not judg'd by him to extend to other than Heathens profelyted, who had that Uncleaness to be wash'd away, which the Christians Offspring had not.

And for the Fancy, that by the *designatos sanctitati* is intended, that they were design'd for Baptism, I see no ground for it at

all ; but rather that they were design'd for Holiness, without any particular *Baptism* : whereas, in *others*, he supposes Holiness to be the Consequence of it by Christ's Decree.

However, be his meaning what it will, as I build not on it, so I scarce think Mr. *Wall* will judg of the Primitive Practice by *Tertullian's* Judgment or Advice, which is not very favourable for early Infant-Baptism, or for appropriating the Act to the *Clergy* ; especially in a Business wherein he writes with such Uncertainty and Inconsistency, and was certainly in the wrong, either in allowing the Baptism of Infants, or in pleading for the delay of Baptism to riper Years, by such Arguments as he uses : so that he seems not to know fully what the Practice of the Church, or the Duty of Christians was in that Affair ; or perhaps the Practice was not settled then, but wavering and various.

The plainest and fullest Evidence in Antiquity which Mr. *Wall* brings for baptizing the Children, even of Christian Parents, is in St. *Cyprian's* time ; but then there is as plain Testimony from that Author *de Lapsis*, that it was customary to give the *Eucharist* also to Infants : And if this was an Innovation and an Error in the Administration of the one Sacrament, 'tis no wonder if there should be an Error as to the Application of the other also. Superstition begun to spread apace ; and who knows which began first, whether the communicating the Infants of Christian Parents, or the baptizing them ? So that unless more early Instances can be given of baptizing the Offspring of profelyted Parents, than of communicating Infants (which *Austin* judg'd so antient as to account it an Apostolical Tradition) I don't see any better Authority from Antiquity for the one than for the other ; and both may seem to stand on the same ground. The antient Practice will then give us no more true Light into the Apostolical Practice, as to Baptism, than it will do as to the Apostolical Practice in the *Eucharist* ; if the one was corrupted, why not the other ? Both might possibly be apply'd beyond their due bounds, and extended to wrong Subjects ; when once Men plac'd more Virtue in these Rituals, than was meet, no wonder if they were fond of applying 'em to more than was at first intended.

I know Mr. *Wall* takes some notice of the Advantage, which from his Argument redounds to *Socinus's* Opinion, viz. of the no-necessity of continuing Baptism to Christian Posterity ; and seems to enter some *Caveats* against the Consequence I am drawing from his way of proving Infant-Baptism : but he is far from obviating or overthrowing this Consequence by any thing that he has suggested. He endeavours to guard himself, by telling us,

Object. 1. That there never was any Age (at least since Abraham) in which the Children that were admitted into Covenant, whether of
Jews

Jews or Profelytes, had not some Badg of such their Admission. Introduct. p. 55. To this I answer, 1. If it was so before *Abraham*, this is enough to shew that 'tis not necessary always to be otherwise. Many things were us'd all along in the Church from *Abraham's* time, that are laid aside under the Gospel; and indeed the time since *Abraham* amounts to no more than just the *Jewish* Dispensation that began in *Abraham*, and was more compleatly establish'd under *Moses*.

2. No such Badg of such Admission was ever in any Age necessary, without a Divine Command; and therefore if there be no Command for such Admission by Badg, there is no such reason for it as of old. But,

3. The matter of Fact asserted by *Mr. Wall* is not true; for even since *Abraham's* time, yea and ever since that time, the Female Children of natural Jews and Profelytes were admitted into the Jewish Church, by virtue of their Descent and Birth, without any new Badg requir'd in order to their Admission: for that these Females were wont to be admitted by Sacrifice ever since *Abraham's* time, nay, since *Moses's* time, *Mr. Wall* has confidently asserted, but cannot prove; nay, that in any Age it was necessary for them to be admitted by that Ceremony, he cannot shew; nor did God ever require any such thing. If the *Jews* had lately introduc'd such a Custom (which yet he has not made appear) 'tis not to be quoted for a *Precedent*, or as an Instance of the Divine Method with his Church, when 'twas only an arbitrary human Injunction at most. So I turn *Mr. Wall's* Argument against him, and say, That if there never was any Age in which God did not admit divers Persons into Covenant, or into his Church, without any visible Badg of that Admission in their own Persons, then it will not be unsutable to his former Methods, if he so admit some under the Gospel-Dispensation.

Obj. 2. He says, *The Male Children of Jews and Profelytes were admitted by Circumcision.*

Ans. 1. I allow it; but then it was because this was particularly requir'd of them by God, and probably for some other reason (proper to their Constitution) than admitting 'em into the Church; since the Females were admitted without it. Let such a Divine Ordinance be produc'd for baptizing the Offspring of Christians, and it shall suffice with me, else there is no Consequence in it. To say, that because the Jews circumcis'd the Children of circumcis'd Parents at God's Command, therefore we must baptize the Children of baptiz'd Parents, tho contrary to what was practis'd by the Jews, is quite besides the meaning of Christ's Command. For, 2. I add, That the Jews Practice of Circumcision, is not the Christians Direction for the Practice of Baptism; because our Lord *Jesus* did nor did his Disciples to baptize as they were wont to circumcise among the Jews, but to baptize as they were wont to baptize, as *Mr. Wall*

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owns. Therefore 'tis no matter how Circumcision was apply'd, but the Question is how Baptism was so; and if Baptism was wont to be practis'd in a different Method, and on different Subjects from what Circumcision was, then 'tis plain our Christian Baptism, which Christ requires to be regulated by the Jewish Baptism, ought to be conform'd to the known Rules of Baptism, and not to them of Circumcision.

Nor can any pretend to urge *Parity of Reason* in the Case, because it cannot be made appear that such Circumcision of the Infants of Jews was not *either* a mere arbitrary Injunction of God, *or* else founded upon some particular reason, proper to the State of that People, who were to be kept separate from all other Nations. In the latter Case there will be no *Parity of Reason*, and in the former no reason at all from the nature of the thing, being God's Sovereign Pleasure, which is at liberty to vary. And as to the Nature or intrinsick Goodness of the thing, there seem'd no Excellency at all in such a Badg, as *Justin Martyr* well observes of Circumcision; *In signum, datam circumcissionem, non tanquam opus justitiæ, quidquid enim ad justitiam virtutemque pertinet, etiam fæminis Deus dedit, ut ex aquo servare possint.* Dial. cum Tryph.

But adds *Mr. Wall*, *St. Paul* says, Baptism serves instead of Circumcision, calling it the Circumcision of Christ, Col. 2. 11, 12. But what then? I hope it does not follow that the Subjects of Baptism must be just the same as of Circumcision, because there may be some common use of both. They that were baptiz'd into Christ, as the *Colossian* Profelytes had been, were spiritually circumcis'd, and mortify'd to Sin, as much as the Jews who were circumcis'd with hand: but this does not argue that all Christians must be baptiz'd, since as the one half of the Jews Posterity were capable of this inward spiritual Circumcision, without the external Circumcision, and were in a sort held for circumcis'd or clean, by virtue of their Descent from circumcis'd Parents; even so may the Posterity of Christians have this spiritual Circumcision, without any other Baptism than that of their Christian Parents, which in a sort may be held to be virtually the baptizing of their whole Race and Offspring. This intirely depends on the Will of the Lawgiver, which *Mr. Wall* has not made appear to be, that the Seed of Christian Profelytes should be baptiz'd, any more than the Seed of Jewish Profelytes were so.

If it be said Baptism is necessary, even for such as are born in Christianity, to engage them more solemnly to dedicate themselves to God personally, and so give them a quicker sense of their Duty and Obligation, than they can be conceiv'd to have by such a general relation to God and Christ, as rises from their being come of Christian Parents.

I answer, 1. That if we must be directed in the use of Baptism, by the Advantages we imagine it may be made serviceable to, then it seems as necessary that we often repeat our Baptism, to revive our Obligation, after many years are past, and the fresh sense of that Solemnity is worn off. So that this Argument (unless the Divine Command makes a Difference) has as much force in it, for often renewing Baptism on others, as for renewing it upon Children, who have been already engag'd to God; and in some sort have been baptiz'd in their Parents Baptism, and are born in Covenant with him.

2. I judg one may have as lively a sense of his Ancestors Baptism, and their Engagement for themselves and their Issue, as for his own personal Baptism in the Incapacity of his Infancy, of which he has no more remembrance than of the other, which is to him the same thing.

3. There are other sufficient ways to revive the sense of our Duty to God, and of our religious Bonds, viz. by the other religious Dutys of our Profession, and in particular by the *Lord's Supper*.

Perhaps some may say, Suppose it be not certain that any but immediate *Converts* are requir'd to be baptiz'd; yet what harm can there be in renewing it to their Posterity, tho it may not be necessary?

1. I say, as to the harm of doing it, there will be no more nor less harm in baptizing the Children of Christians, on a Supposition that they be already sanctify'd in their Parents Baptism, than there is in rebaptizing Persons once duly baptiz'd, or *reordaining* Ministers once duly ordain'd; 'tis only doing a thing with great Solemnity in God's Name that is needless, and to no purpose, unless something else can make it needful besides Christ's Institution.

2. If it be not necessary to be done, then I add, that tho there should be no great harm in doing a thing not necessary, yet there may be great harm in not leaving others to their liberty, and in urging the necessity of such personal Baptism, in order to Church-Communion, if it be not commanded by Christ. All needless Occasions of Contention are hurtful; and therefore tho I would not measure my Duty to God, nor interpret his holy Command, merely in accommodation to any outward Interest, no not that of external Quiet and Rest from contentious Divisions, at the expence of Truth (since our Lord himself will have Truth profess'd, tho it prove an occasion of setting Families at variance, *Brother against Brother, the Mother against the Daughter, and the Daughter against the Mother*, Mat. 10. 35.) yet if what I advance be consistent with Truth, I shall think it the better for having a good tendency to promote Peace, and taking away many occasions of unhappy Strife among Christians, as I judg it will. For

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This will ease us of many bitter Controversys about *Baptism*, as whether by Immersion or Effusion? Whether Infants or Adult Persons are to be baptiz'd in a Christian Church? Whether by Bishop or Presbyter? Since we are all generally descended from some or other Ancestors, that no doubt have been regularly baptiz'd: Nay this may probably prove Quakers to be of the Christian Church still, tho not baptiz'd themselves, while they are the Seed of baptiz'd Parents, and still own Christianity, as they understand it. Nay this may give great ease to the Clergy, and particularly to Mr. Wall, who, p. 154. is *very much against the Doctrine which involves the Baptizer in endless Scruples, which Infants he may baptize, and which not: and therefore is for Baptism of all Children, the Owners of which desire Baptism for them,* p. 381. But tho this be a compendious way of ending Scruples as to the Subjects of Baptism, yet even still there are many Scruples will meet him again at another turn on his Principles. For

If every Christian must have a particular Baptism duly administered to himself, and may not be admitted to the *Eucharist* without such Baptism, then 'tis incumbent on the Administrator or Presbyter to examine into the validity of the Baptism of every Communicant: As whether he ever was baptiz'd, or not? By whom? Whether by a Catholick, or a Schismatick, or Heretick? Whether by a *Tritheist*, or a *Socinian*? Whether by one ordain'd aright, or an Intruder? I confess I don't think these Matters are inquir'd into, in order to Communion either with the Church or Dissenters, except in some Points by the Antipædobaptists, who usually place their main Zeal in this Article; yet I must think these are needful Questions concerning a Communicant, if a true authentick Baptism be necessary to Christian-Communion, and to Salvation among Christians.

It would be hard to question Mr. Wall's great care in these matters, especially now there are, as he owns, so many *Soci-nians* in the Church, and out of it; against whom he has eas'd his Mind, by such a discharge of his heavy and angry Censures, without much Argument; and declares against Communion in Worship with them, who believe *Jesus Christ to be in his best Nature of finite Dignity and Capacity* (i.e. say the Unitarians, in other words, to be the *first-begotten of the Creation*, Col. 1. 15. or that *the Father is greater than he*, as Christ himself speaks.) I say, no question but Mr. Wall takes care that he has no such Communicants in his own Parish, and I think he cannot admit any, of whom he is not rationally assur'd, that they were baptiz'd by sound Catholicks. This is not a matter to be loosely suppos'd in the general, if Baptism be so necessary to Salvation and to Christian Communion, as he seems to suppose it to be.

I do indeed agree with him, that if he and the *Unitarians*, *Arian*, or *Socinian*, do worship two different Gods, as he is inclinable to think, pag. 78. he cannot be too wary in admitting 'em. I cannot see, says he, *that we worship the same God*, since our God is *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; i. e. the *Unitarians* take the first Command according to the Letter, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but Me*. But Mr. Wall, &c. interprets it, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but us Three*, and therefore they worship not the same God. But then let Mr. Wall consider what follows, That if the *Unitarians* worship the true God of *Israel*; that God who made all things, the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus*, and the same God which *Jesus Christ* worship'd (who never is said to worship any but his *Father*) then it follows, that if Mr. Wall worships another God, 'tis not that true God; and then I doubt he will hardly have the Honour, he derides the *Socinians* with, of being admitted to wear a white *Turbant* in *Stamble*. He must e'en go a little farther off, and among some of the remote *Indians* may perhaps find some Associates, with whom to have brotherly and unenvy'd Communion. I only mention this, to shew him the Consequence of his rash Zeal; not that I think he really is for another God than the *Socinians* or *Arians*, tho' of that God he may have other Notions, as the several sorts of *Trinitarians* have different Conceptions of him from each other. I pray God preserve him from gratifying his Passion and Aversion to *Arians*, &c. at so dear a rate, as the renouncing the true God for their believing in him, or the admitting many Gods because they hold but one.

At this rate, how many different Gods might an envious Mind tax the *Christians* with? Thus the several sorts of *Trinitarians* will have several Gods: Our God, says one *Trinitarian*, is *Three Infinite Minds*; but, says another sort, our God is but one *Infinite Mind*, with three Modes or Somewhats, &c. Ergo, they don't worship the same God, according to Mr. Wall. So the *Armians* and *Calvinists* will have two Gods; for says one side, Our God is of a *Nature* holy and good, he can't will Sin and the Misery of his *Creatures*: Our God, says the other, does will and decree Sin, and makes Men do it, to please himself in their Damnation, as an Act of *Sovereignty*; Ergo, we have not the same God, nor of the same Nature. This is a fine healing Method which Mr. Wall is setting up!

Many have wondred how it comes to pass that the *Unitarians*, who have the most to say for themselves, and whose Arguments are serious, sober and pertinent, by Confession of their Opposers, should yet be run down with more Odium and bitter Censures than any other Sect: but the Solution is not difficult; for when once any Party, either by the Constitution of their Church, or by the sacred Ties of a beneficial Incom, are oblig'd to subscribe, or openly pronounce the undoubted everlasting

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Perdition of their Brethren, then the next thing likely to be done by a considerate Man (whose Heart smites him for it as a harsh uncommon piece of Cruelty) is to devise, and strain, and aggravate Matters as ill as he can, that he may make those Persons look something like such as are fit to be thus curs'd and damn'd by him; since curs'd and damn'd, with great Solemnity, they must needs be: Left if they should be thus censur'd without a Cause, that Text, *Judg not, that ye be not judg'd*, Mat. 7. 1, 2. might bode them ill, and frighten them with that same Damnation which with such undoubting Confidence they have openly denounc'd against their Brethren. That therefore they may be able to perform their part heartily, 'tis requisite to make things look as bad as possibly they can on the *Unitarians* side, and to imagine these worship another God, and blaspheme Jesus Christ, &c. that so without relenting, they may, in open view, cheerfully offer 'em up to the sorest Indignation of God forever; which if they do escape, 'twill be without much Thanks due to the Disciples of *Vigilius Thapsensis*.

This is the more unreasonable in Mr. Wall, for that he has given us two Characters of fundamental Doctrines, which will go very far to clear the *Unitarians* from the Charge of Error in Fundamentals, p. 547, 548. Three Persons in one and the same God, or Infinite Mind, being never expressly or clearly and plainly deliver'd in any Text of Scripture, whatever proof be pretended from remote Consequences, which some sincere Persons cannot perceive, no not with the help of an early Education therein, and a strong bias too from great worldly Interests, which are not wont to blind the Eyes in favour of the losing side of a Question. Nor was it in the next place put into the most antient *CreeDs*, witness the common antient *Creed*, call'd the *Apostles Creed*; nay even the *Nicene Creed* never determin'd the equality of the Third Person to the Father, and therefore a part of the *Constantinopolitan Creed* is tack'd to the end of it, and now-a-days it passes all together for the *Nicene Creed*, as the Learned well know.

But to return (after this digression made necessary by Mr. Wall's Warmth against the *Unitarians*) to the Argument of Baptism; I am sensible one Question may arise, from what has been said about the not baptizing the Seed of Believers, *viz.* Whether a Person may communicate at the Lord's Table who is born in Christianity of baptiz'd Parents, but has not been himself baptiz'd in Person? But this will easily be determin'd by what has been said, according to the Strength or Weakness of my main Argument.

For tho Mr. W.— says, *Of all Absurditys none ever maintain'd that the Unbaptiz'd should communicate*; yet if he will not allow the Seed of baptiz'd Parents, for baptiz'd Persons by virtue of their Christian Birth, he must either shew that the Offspring of Believers

lievers were in Person baptiz'd in the early beginnings of Christianity, or there will be some ground to suppose, that what he accounts an Absurdity was the first Practice; and that Christians did communicate by virtue of their Birth-Privilege, as the Seed of baptiz'd Parents: since they who were bound to communicate, were not (as far as yet appears) bound to be, in their immediate Persons, baptiz'd.

And if we look to the *Jewish* Custom, in relation to the *Postcœnium* of the Passover, whence our Lord took the occasion of instituting his Supper, we may find yet more countenance for our Supposition, in that all the *Female-Communicants* were admitted without Baptism, or any other requir'd Badg of Initiation; so that they were but such as descended from circumcis'd Parents, tho the *Males*, on some other account, were to be first circumcis'd. Whence it appears, that if we make the Case of Admission to the Lord's Supper parallel to this, we can only say, That such as are requir'd to be baptiz'd, must be so before they communicate, and no others: and then this resolves the Business into the extent of the Command for Baptism, whether it reach to the Seed of Profelytes, or not; otherwise there is no necessity from the nature of the Ordinances themselves, that all should be solemnly initiated by a Ceremony before communicating.

Now upon the whole, as I have no Interest, Party, nor Prejudice to serve (which scarcely any but a Layman can truly say) so I am not dogmatical, nor positive in the Matter, but only propound it as a Problem: Nor will I violently defend it, but shall be altogether as well pleas'd to see my Argument fairly confuted, as any one shall be to undertake it; and will conclude with Mr. Baxter's Words (in his *Catholick Communion doubly defended*) *I flatter no Party, and I look to gain by none: I have gather'd no Church to depend on for Kindness, nor is the fear of displeasing them a Bias to my Judgment.*

F I N I S.

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